

On Being His Sheep

1 Peter 2:19-25

Introduction

For Carol and I, **GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY** is normally one of the best Sunday's of the year. Back in '94, a couple years before I started pastoring in the Baptist Church, we started raising sheep. It was to be a four-year FFA project for our daughter. But once we got started, we couldn't get stopped until 2007, when I moved to Indy to pastor a church there. When we got rid of the sheep, our granddaughter said we had to keep at least two as pets. This last week, we had to have them put to sleep. I guess that fits in to the way this Easter season has gone. This has made me think a lot about the sheep, so I want to talk about what it means to be Christ's sheep.

From the Sheep's Point of View

On Good Shepherd Sunday, we usually focus on Jesus, our **GOOD SHEPHERD**. But, what's a shepherd without sheep? An unemployed shepherd. So, we are looking at this Scripture from the sheep's point of view. We turn our attention to the Epistle Reading and see what Peter says about being Christ's sheep.

Sheep Stray

This first thing we see is in **verse 25**—*For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.* Sheep stray. We never had much trouble with that with our sheep. We kept them in a fenced-in pasture. When they did get out, it was just to get to better grass and they never strayed away. Sometimes, one or two would find a way out through the fence to eat in the next pasture. But by evening, they'd find their way back into their own pen. One night, a gate got left open and they all got out into the back yard. Our dog, Nacho, rounded them up and I led them back in. But shepherds in the Mid-east have it different. Their sheep live on the open range and they will stray away. They shouldn't; they have a powerful herding instinct and usually stick together. But, occasionally, one will just wander off. We do that, too. Sometimes, the grass looks greener on the other side and we just wander off and try something else.

Sheep Follow

What sheep are supposed to do is follow the Shepherd because that's what's best for them. Once again, since ours were penned up, we didn't have much experience in this matter. The Mid-eastern shepherd would lead his sheep from one pasture to another. This is how they got fed. So, if you wanted to eat, you follow the shepherd.

Look to Christ

Peter gives us Jesus as our Example. *For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps (1 Peter 2:21).* It appears as if Peter is saying we will suffer because Jesus suffered. *Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours (John 15:20).* If we are faithful to Jesus, we should expect the same

treatment He received. And why not? It seems only logical, doesn't it? If we follow the Shepherd, we'll walk where the Shepherd walks and experience what the Shepherd experiences. So, we want to make sure we're following the **right** Shepherd.

How Do We Know His Voice?

(Read **John 10:2-4**). The sheep follow the Shepherd because they know His voice. They have a relationship with the Shepherd. They follow Him because they know Him. My Dad told me about a Captain he had in WWII. He put the men first, developed a relationship with them. They trusted him and gladly followed him. We trust Jesus as our Shepherd because we know He cares for us and wants what's best for us.

He Gave His Life for Us

We know this because He died for us. He bore our sins in His body on the cross. He took the punishment for our sins, so we don't have to. He exchanged His **righteousness** and **life** for our **sinfulness** and **death**.

By His Wounds We Are Healed

How have we been **healed** by His **wounds**? Peter references the **SERVANT SONG** of **Isaiah 53** (read **Isaiah 53:4-6**). Jesus is identified with us because He carries our sins. By bearing our sins and giving us His righteousness, He has healed us by restoring our relationship with God. Without the healing of that relationship, no other healing is useful or even possible.

Means of Graces

As we said last week, we recognize Jesus through the means of grace, **WORD** and **SACRAMENT**. He freely gives us forgiveness of sin and heals us when we hear His **WORD** and receive His **BODY** and **BLOOD**. We are His sheep and here we learn how to follow Him wherever He leads.

*May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
